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Book Note

**TO HAVE AND TO HOLD: MARRYING AND ITS
DOCUMENTATION IN WESTERN CHRISTENDOM, 400–
1600, edited by Philip L. Reynolds & John Witte, Jr.¹**

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EDITORS PHILIP L. REYNOLDS and John Witte Jr. bring together the works of twelve scholars from varying expert backgrounds to compile a volume informing the history, purpose, and forms of marriage, as well as the documentation of marriage throughout different regions and eras in Europe.

To Have and to Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400–1600 consists of thirteen chapters, each focused on the marriage traditions of a particular area at a particular period. Each chapter also takes its own unique approach to grasp the marriage traditions of its subject era and region, demonstrating the expertise and interest of its author.

The introductory chapter written by Reynolds canvasses the main themes and terms in the volume to provide the reader with a guiding context. Reynolds takes the opportunity to impress on readers the differences between medieval marriages and modern marriages, most significantly in the extended “process” of marrying.

The collection is traversed with three broad recurring themes: church, contract, and property. In addition, the ninth chapter (“Marrying and Marriage Litigation in Medieval Ireland”) by Art Cosgrove makes a unique contribution that focuses on the resolution of faulty marriages. Cosgrove builds his essay by introducing the different attitudes in two parts of medieval Ireland, the Anglo-Norman and the Gaelic-Irish populations, and then moving on to illustrate their different ways of dealing with invalid unions. The appendix to the chapter includes some of the written decisions disposing of the matters.

1. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 536 pages.

In the final chapter, Reynolds' co-editor Witte chronicles the changes in marriage traditions with the advent of the Protestant reformation. Witte describes the intertwining of civil requirements with religious requirements, noting the marriage liturgy as the capping celebration of a legal union based on a contractual relationship. As is evident in the concluding chapter, one of the most interesting aspects of this collection is the recounting of the continual battle of the three elements (church, contract, and property) in dictating a valid union and the resulting changes in the focus of marriage traditions throughout history.